

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 SSM-03 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
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USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2751

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT; PLO
SUBJ: KHALID FAHUM ANNOUNCES AGENDA FOR PALESTINE CENTRAL COUNCIL
MEETING

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: ON MAY 11, DAMASCUS DAILY AL-THAWRA
PUBLISHED TALK WITH PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN
KHALID FAHUM IN WHICH HE DISCUSSED SUBJECTS PALESTINE CENTRAL
COUNCIL WOULD DEAL WITH DURING ITS NEXT MEETING HERE ON
MAY 20. FAHUM SUMMARIZED FOUR MAIN TOPICS AS FOLLOWS:

A) DETERMINING DATE AND VENUE FOR CONVENING OVERDUE
PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL SESSION:
B) STUDYING SITUATION IN LEBANON ON BASIS OF CAIRO AGREEMENT
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(1969) AND COORDINATION WITH THE ARAB STATES AIDMED AT
"ERASING THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION IN SOUTH LEBANON."
C) STUDYING THE CURRENT REQUIREMENTS OF INTRA-PALESTINIAN
RELATIONS INCLUDING THE "NECESSITY FOR UNIFICATION OF ALL
PALESTINIAN ENERGIES IN THE FACE OF ZIONIST AGRESSION AND
AMERICAN ATTEMPTS TO IGNORE THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE
PALESTINIAN PEOPLE."

D) STUDYING THE ARAB SITUATION IN LIGHT OF CURRENT ATTEMPTS TO CONVENE AN ARAB SUMMIT.

2. IN HIS REMARKS FAHUM NOTES THAT CAIRO IS NO LONGER SUITABLE SITE FOR A PNG CONCLAVE. AFTER SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM AND ALSO FOLLOWS THE SYRIAN LINE IN DISCUSSING THE QUESTION OF AN ARAB SUMMIT BY NOTING THAT "ARAB SOLIDARITY WAS ROCKED AND DEPRIVED IF ITS MEANING BY SADAT'S INITIATIVE OF CAPITULATION." HE REMINDS READERS THAT THE PLO IS A MEMBER OF THE "STEADFASTNESS FRONT" AND IMPLIES THAT IT WILL WORK FOR ARAB SOLIDARITY WITHIN THE CONTEXT
END UNCLASSIFIED.

3. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CEASE-FIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON, DAMASCUS- BASED PLO LEADERS WERE JUBILANT AND FAHUM MOOTED THE POSSIBILITY OF MERGING SOME OF THE PLO ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDING FATAH AND SAIQA. SUBSEQUENT DIFFERENCES OVER ISSUES SUCH AS RESPECT FOR THE CEASE-FIRE AND COOPERATION WITH UNIFIL, HOWEVER, LED TO CHARACTERISTIC PALESTINIAN BICKERING. MANY PLO PERSONALITIES HERE ARE OPENLY CRITICAL OF ARAFAT'S LEADERSHIP, ALTHOUGH NO ONE IS SUGGESTING THAT HE IS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE.

4. EXCOMM MEMBER NASHASHIBI IN RECENT MEETING WITH AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF CRITICIZED ARAFAT FOR MAKING CONTRADICTORY COMMITMENTS TO THE UN AND HIS OWN FORCES. ACCORDING TO
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NASHASHIBI, WHILE ARAFAT WAS PROMISING WALDHEIM HIS COOPERATION, HE WAS RELUCTANT TO TELL HIS COMMANDERS NOT TO ENGAGE IN BUSINESS AS USUAL. NASHASHIBI TOOK SYRIAN LINE THAT POL SHOULD GIVE ISRAEL NO PRETEXT TO REMAIN IN THE SOUTH. HE CLAIMED THAT HE AND OTHERS HAD URGED ARAFAT TO ADOPT A MORE COLLEGIAL APPROACH TO PLO DECISION-MAKING BUT SEEMED TO HOLD OUT LITTLE HOPE THAT ARAFAT WOULD HEED THIS ADVICE. NASHASHIBI FELT THAT PALESTINIANS IN THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES HAD TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE SYRIANS.

5. COMMENT: GIVEN REPORTS OF RIFTS WITHIN FATAH AND BETWEEN FATAH AND REJECTIONIST PALESTINIAN GROUPS, THE FORTHCOMING PCC MEETING PROMISES TO BE A TUMULTUOUS ONE. ARAFAT WAS REPORTEDLY UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT A PNC SESSION PRIOR TO THE ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON. THE PURPOSE FOR THE SESSION, ACCORDING TO SOME, WAS TO ENGINEER A RETURN OF HABASH TO THE EXCOMM FOLLOWING THE ADOPTION OF THE PLO'S TRIPOLI RESOLUTION. WE DOUBT THAT ARAFAT WANTS TO SEE THE TRIPOLI RESOLUTION ENSHRINED AS PLO POLICY OR THAT HE WISHES TO GIVE SADAT FURTHER OFFENSE BY HOLDING THE MEETING IN A CAPITAL OTHER THAN CAIRO.

6. WHILE SAIQA LEADER MUHSIN PRIVATELY HAS GRUMBLED ABOUT UNIFIL'S ROLE AND THREATENED CONFRONTATION WITH UN FORCES, SIAQA PEOPLE CAN BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT ARAFAT IN HIS DECISION TO "COOPERATE" WITH UNIFIL GIVEN SYRIA'S INTEREST A TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. CURRENT DIFFERENCES OVER THIS QUESTION, HOWEVER, MAKE IT UNLIKELY THAT MUCH HEADWAY CAN BE MADE IN INCREASING COORDINATION, LET ALONG UNITY, AMONG THE FRACTIOUS PLO GUERRILLA GROUPS. ON THE SUBJECT OF AN ARAB SUMMIT, ARAFAT WILL COME UNDER PRESSURE FROM SAIQA AND OTHERS TO FOLLOW THE SYARIN LINE--REJECT A SUMMIT INCLUDING SADAT UNTIL LATTER PUBLICLY ADMITS HIS FAILURE AND CUTS OFF DIRECT CONTACTS WITH THE ISRAELIS.
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